THOMAS COLLINS
A TYPICAL EVANGELIST

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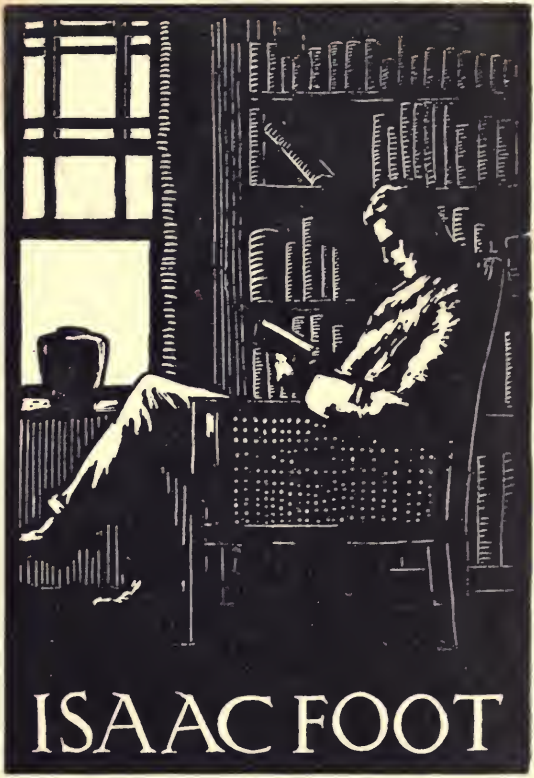

ISAAC FOOT

Rev, Henry Cowling

— October 1907 —

The Library of Methodist Biography

EDITED BY
REV. JOHN TELFORD, B.A.

THOMAS COLLINS

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Thos Collins

THOMAS COLLINS

A TYPICAL EVANGELIST

BY THE

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London

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THOMAS COLLINS

A TYPICAL EVANGELIST

CHAPTER I

EVANGELISM, PAST AND PRESENT

WHY should we reproduce the life of an evangelist whose work was done in the first half of the nineteenth century? Are we not living in new times and working under new conditions? Thomas Collins was born in 1810, and since then many changes have taken place in the religious and social life of this country. There has been a new distribution of population, so that, instead of being a nation of villages and small towns, we are now a nation of crowded cities. Newspapers, schoolmasters, politicians, scientists, social reformers, and Christian Churches have been doing their work, and have filled

the minds of the people in some cases with 'a divine discontent,' and in other cases with new aspirations and ideals. Have we not acquired new ways of looking at the problems of life, and do we not need new presentations of great truths and new methods of Christian service ?

Other voices are demanding, with equal force and reason, that we must go into the past for our best lessons and our mightiest inspirations for Christian evangelism. In this way earnest spirits are ranging themselves under two banners, some praying for 'an old-fashioned revival,' and others demanding that we discard the older methods of thinking, preaching, and working, and introduce 'a new evangelism.' We do not cry for the old or the new. To stipulate ways and methods, or to obtrude our own preferences, is to interfere with the freedom and sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. We believe it to be a mistake and a real danger to set one period of church history over against another period, so far as evangelism is concerned. The fact is that the true evangelism, like the evangel itself, is always old and always new. It is like the bursting of

springtime. Spring has been coming for centuries, and yet every springtime is a new unfolding of life, beauty, fragrance, and song. In helping on the victorious march of the kingdom of Christ we may receive life, light, and power from every age and from all types of men.

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of buoyant and triumphant evangelism so far as the Methodist Church was concerned. Methodism held the field alone in this special kind of Christian service. Other Churches stood for great principles, and did their full share of work in influencing our national character, but the Methodist Church went into the highways and hedges and claimed the outside world for Christ. This age of attack and spirited aggression was also a period of great evangelists. The majority of the ministers of Methodism were out-and-out soul-saving men, but amongst them were men of special prominence and power. John Nelson, John Smith, David Stoner, William Bramwell, Gideon Ouseley, Robert Young, Hodgson Casson, and William Dawson are names that call up many of the grand revival scenes in Methodist history.

Amongst these men Thomas Collins was pre-eminently successful as a soul-winner. The keynote of his life was struck in some of his own sentences: 'God loves Methodism much, but He loves souls more'; 'The solemn one thing of my life shall be to save souls'; 'I expect salvation in every sermon.' These burning words expressed the deep, abiding passion of his nature. As the Rev. Samuel Coley, his kinsman and his gifted biographer, says: 'For saving souls Mr. Collins had not only a vocation but a passion. Rest from such work seemed to him a disaster. On the few days his much-demanding circuit left unfettered, cottage services were improvised, or outdoor preaching arranged. He sought occasional change of sphere and of method, but no rest from the work of saving souls.'

Thomas Collins presents to the Methodist preachers of to-day a distinct and much-needed type of evangelism. He was pre-eminently a circuit evangelist—that is, he was a burning evangelist in all the ordinary regulated work of Methodist preachers; and when he had fulfilled the customary round of duties on the circuit plan, his flaming

zeal created its own opportunities for saving men.

The constitution of the Methodist Church has a distinct bearing on the grand work of evangelism. There is the itinerant system, which appoints the ministers to a given sphere for one, two, or three years and its Connexionalism, which secures that the smallest village has a distinct link with the Circuit, the District Synod, and the Conference. Then the circuit system groups together a number of chapels in towns and villages, placing them under a plurality of pastors, who may have widely different gifts, but who mutually arrange for the most profitable distribution of those gifts throughout the circuit. Then, further, there is the colleagueship of the ministers, which secures that three or four brethren are associated for mutual sympathy and oversight, and for the extension of the kingdom of Christ throughout a well-defined area. The Methodist Church is so constituted, and all its ministers and people so linked and bound together, that a touch at any one point throbs and vibrates throughout the whole. If the aggressive spirit dies out of the hearts of the

Methodist preachers, and the machinery of circuit life is worked in a mechanical way, then the very mechanism of our work becomes a hindrance to evangelism. If, on the other hand, our ministers flame with zeal, all church workers and officials quickly catch the fire, and it runs on and on through the whole circuit, making the smallest Society and the humblest individual intensely earnest for the salvation of men. All experience proves that what the Methodist preachers are, that will the people in their circuits be. The bonds of union between preachers and people are so close and vital that the spiritual temperature of the one cannot rise without lifting up a whole circuit, and that temperature cannot fall without dragging the circuit down.

Thomas Collins was a splendid illustration of how a Methodist preacher may, year in and year out, keep his colleagues and his own sphere of labour in a condition of sound, continuous revival.

We are not afraid of 'specialists' in revival work, but the specialist we most desire to see is the man who keeps the holy fire of revivalism burning in every part of circuit life.

On tracing out the word 'evangelist' in the New Testament we find it is definitely applied to two men who were widely different from each other—namely, Philip and Timothy. Philip is distinctly called 'Philip the evangelist.' He was an itinerant evangelist, moving about from place to place, gathering the people together and proclaiming his evangel for a short time, and then passing on to another sphere. He would be called by the Methodism of to-day 'a Connexional evangelist.' Timothy was an evangelist of quite another type. He was living in Ephesus, a great centre of commerce and of government, and also a city of idolatry, superstition, and vice. Tremendous problems of the most perplexing kind confronted him; but to him, Paul, his great leader and friend, wrote saying: 'Do the work of an evangelist.' He might have to exercise pastoral oversight of Christians; he might have many difficult problems of church government to settle; but he was to 'do the work of an evangelist.' For two periods extending over five or six years this gifted young preacher, with a timid, shrinking nature, but with indomitable Christian

courage, held the fort for Christ in Ephesus. He was the city evangelist, and would be designated by the Methodists of to-day the 'Central Hall evangelist.'

The Connexional or itinerating evangelist has his place and power in church life. When the Church has prepared itself by prayer and fasting, when the neighbourhood to be influenced has been again and again visited by prayerful and sympathetic workers, then the ten days' mission may yield a great harvest. In recent years God has raised up in all the Churches a number of gifted and powerful men, who have been able to put in the sickle, and in a few days have reaped the result of years of patient toil. But, after all, this is only a sortie; and what most of our communities, steeped in worldliness, materialism, and indifference, need, is a prayerful, persistent, prolonged siege, or the kingdom of Satan will never fall. The cities that are under the dominion of evil to-day will never be captured, like Jericho, by seven days' marching and trumpeting. Hence we thank God for *the city evangelist*, who concentrates his energies and organizes his forces for a long period of years, looking

to the same sources for spiritual truths and inspirations, and at the same time taking full count of the many-sided problems that confront him.

The Central Hall evangelism of to-day is a modern development in Methodism, but it is becoming not only a tremendous power in that Church, but a pattern and inspiration to other Churches. When these Central Missions began, men declared that they were only a passing phase of church life; but events have proved that this type of Christian work in cities has come to stay. In these movements we have a well-sustained, well-directed, continuous evangelism. There is a perpetual Pentecost in many of these great centres of Christian aggression, for in every service miracles of grace are wrought. Many things conduce to this. The public services are free, homely, and unconventional; both work and worship are unfettered by those old traditions and formalities which damp down enthusiasm and strangle religious life. To these centres the raw material for the kingdom of God is brought—that is, men and women who not only need salvation, but *feel* their need of

it. Every new convert becomes a *worker* and a *witnesser*, and thus the sound is continually going out to the regions beyond. There is singleness of aim in all the indoor and outdoor arrangements for Christian work. All these operations are surrounded by an atmosphere of prayer, for the prayer-meeting is the largest and most important meeting held during the week.

Methodism needs this in every one of its circuits. Thank God that many of the most earnest spirits in our Church are longing and praying for this! These marvels of grace seen in the continuous evangelism of our Central Missions may be secured in ordinary circuit life and duty. It may be difficult to emancipate the circuit life from the bondage of traditions and habits that have done excellent work in the past, but such an emancipation is necessary and possible. The lessons and illustrations that come to us from the living, burning life of Thomas Collins may not only point the way, but may inspire ministers and people in the ordinary round of circuit duty to work in that way.

CHAPTER II

THE EVANGELIST IN THE MAKING

It is not difficult to trace the influence of inheritance, godly training, and early associations on the temperament, moral character, and ultimate life-work of Thomas Collins. His robust evangelism seemed to run in the blood, and was strengthened and increased by the circumstances of his conversion. The fact is, he was born, converted, and trained 'in the fire.' For all the personal and family experiences that surrounded him in the formative period of life we are indebted to Samuel Coley, and they shall be given mainly in his own words.

Present-day students of the law of heredity seem to have arrived at the conclusion that, while it is doubtful whether *acquired* qualities are handed down, the *stable* qualities and characteristics are transmitted from sire to son. His father, John Collins, was a

man of strong individuality, utterly unconventional, very original, of great faith, earnest zeal, indomitable courage, and almost infinite love of adventure; of whom, if now fast-fading memories could be gathered and fixed, a life might be written matching those of the early Methodist worthies of England in spirituality, and yet vying with the racy stories of American pioneers in interest. The mother was a tender, nerve-shaken, loving woman. She suffered much in body, and was often much depressed in mind; yet her conversation was not without a dash of quaint humour. She had great interest in the progress of the work of God; and it was beautiful to see how the clouds, results of physical causes, which frequently dimmed the joy of her experience, ever broke and scattered in presence of any special triumphs of grace.

The home into which he was born was ordered in the fear of the Lord. Its simplicity and almost Spartan discipline were stern and severe, but they helped to turn out from that lowly household some men and women of real grit.

Thomas was consecrated to God from

his birth. When the child was first brought to him, his father took him, placed a Bible on his breast, and folded the left arm round it; then, after putting a pen in the tiny right hand, knelt down, and prayed that God would accept the lad; would make him a faithful witness of that saving word; would help him, with tongue and pen, to bless his fellows.

His father had also strong views as to the relation in which the baptized children of Christian parents stand to Christ and the Church. As a parent, Mr. John Collins felt comfort in 'the gospel preached unto Abraham'; which 'the law four hundred and thirty years after could not disannul'; which gospel still remains in force. The gracious pledge, dear to every godly father's heart, is, 'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.' This gem for the family St. Peter set afresh, when, in the plenary inspiration of Pentecost, he said, 'The promise is unto you and to your children.'

He held, not without Bible warranty, that until children are of age by self-action to take, and by self-will really have taken, separate standing, the Christian parent is

graciously permitted to claim for them the advantages of his own. The Scripture aphorism is, 'If the root be holy, so are the branches.' The case is adjudged. Paul has ruled it, 1 Cor. vii. 14, 'Your children are holy.'

At their birth he accepted his children as the Lord's. At their baptism he took them from the minister's arms as the Church's. Of a trust so precious, so solemnly committed, and so sealed, he held himself bound in aftertime to render account. His plan of carrying out the idea was this: As soon as his children reached the age of seven years, he entered their names in his class-book, led them by the hand to the meeting as hearers, and claimed for them recognition as members. If any asked, 'Why should they be in?' his reply was, 'Nay, it is your business to show why they should be out!' When one who has been an alien, a profligate, or a worldling presents himself for admission to church-membership, he, of course, must be met with questions: he has his right to prove. But children of Christian parents, having no stain of overt offence, are in a different case. They have a birthright—a

birthright that has been publicly acknowledged; theirs it remains until they forfeit it by immorality, let it lapse by neglect, or repudiate it by perverseness. On the Church that refuses their recognition must lie the responsibility for such action

Cotton Mather, in his *Magnalia*, wisely remarks: 'The Lord hath not set up churches that old Christians may keep one another warm while they live, and then carry away the church with them when they die: no, but that they might with all care nurse still successfully another generation of subjects to our Lord, that may stand up in His kingdom when they are gone.'

Methodism has done much and well by *conquest*, but only little and inadequately by *nurture*. May her power and perfection in *this* matter daily increase! Thousands ought to be, might be, must be, thus gathered into our fold.

Thomas, according to the forementioned family rule, was thus early connected with the Church; and not long after, with very marked circumstances, entered into conscious enjoyment of 'the peace of God.' In the year 1818, Gideon Ouseley, the famous

Irish missionary, preached at Redditch. His word was clothed with much divine power. The heavenly flame melted many. Thomas, just entering on his ninth year, was there. Under that mighty ministry, his heart, prepared by 'grace prevenient,' broke utterly. The public service closed, but he would not leave. Touched by such inconsolable sorrow, Ouseley himself led him into the house of the Rev. John W. Cloake, with whom, and with the father, the holy man continued in prayer until the tears of the weeping child were wiped away, and he indubitably received the Spirit of adoption.

This was the supreme moment of his life, and it never faded from his memory. True that, during a short stay in an unhappily chosen school, there was a brief relapse, but he soon regained his religious footing. His heart was always full of warm gratitude to Gideon Ouseley. A portrait of that venerable evangelist always hung in his room, and that parlour was the most sacred spot in the world to him.

At the missionary meeting held after Ouseley's visit a circumstance occurred, at once heartmelting and uncommon. The

father, being called upon to speak, closed a most earnest address by saying, 'Heathens often dedicate their children unto idols; shall I, who serve the Living God and True, do less?' Then at the word, leading to the front his little boy, he there authoritatively, as his father, offered him to the Lord, and publicly pledged himself never to withhold him from any work the Lord might call him unto. He then further solemnly took promise of his son before the people, that he, through all his after life, would be to Christ a faithful servant and soldier. At that affecting scene many wept; and the chairman of the meeting, the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson, that year President of the Conference, being greatly moved, laid his hands on the boy's head, and blessed him. The troth that day plighted was never forgotten.

This was followed by a season of fuller consecration on the part of the lad himself, an experience that was not only to influence his personal religious life, but to give tone and impulse to all his public ministry.

Early in the year 1830, Henry Breeden, a disciple fresh from the school of John Smith,

came to Redditch. If possible, he outflamed his master. His sermons were numerous, but his topics few. As in the broadside of a warship, everything was so directed as to strike one mark. Each shot was weighty, well-aimed, and *red-hot*. Nothing was thrown away. The whole force of the man was concentrated. Hear him when you would, the terrors of eternity, the freeness of salvation, the fullness of Christian privilege, and no other themes whatever, employed him. A letter of the period, written by a good judge, says, 'Such a man for faith, strength, and tact I never heard.'

At a prayer-meeting held on the evening of March 5, 1830, Thomas Collins, whose spirit for some time had been stirred with desire after holiness, was enabled to believe the cleansing word; and, in the strength of that faith, to bow his whole will utterly to Christ, to whom he surrendered all authority in his soul. The act of devotion was complete. Thenceforth life was a priesthood, and sacrifice a vocation. The altar upon which self was dedicated sanctified the gift, and upon the living sacrifice which faith laid there, heavenly fire came down. The cove-

nant that hour made was never revoked: 'Not your own,' was printed indelibly upon his heart. His sister, during his last illness, remarked to him, with joy, upon his long testimony before the Church of the bliss and duty of perfect love. His reply was, 'I got it; I kept it; I have it now, and it is heaven!'

At once he entered upon Christian work. He successfully recommended the Saviour to others. Methodism has lost thousands of converts, and especially those young in years, because they have not been started at once in definite Christian service. Our young friend at Redditch fell into good hands, for in his early teens the yoke of service was wisely and lovingly placed upon his shoulders.

The Rev. W. Davies toiled; but what was more and better, he attracted toilers round him; he stimulated such converts as God gave him both to improve their talents and to use them. Of the young men he organized several bands, and commissioned them to go forth week by week to visit, pray, exhort, and in every possible way evangelize in the surrounding villages. At the head of one of these pioneer companies Thomas Collins was

placed. His first public attempt to call sinners to repentance was made in a large room at Stratford-on-Avon, to reach which place he walked fifteen miles, and then, after the service, weary but happy, trudged the fifteen miles back again.

As a preparation for his future he entered at once upon a course of mental improvement. Early in the morning he met with kindred spirits for prayer and study, thus forming habits that continued with him right through life.

Such were the experiences and associations that went to the making of this great soul-winner. The influence of other lives on his character was patent and powerful. There was the personality of his father, whose piety was of a robust, sturdy type. Then there was the personality of Gideon Ouseley impressed upon him in those early years which never fade from memory. Through his friend Henry Breeden he had an indirect connexion with John Smith, of revival fame. Then, as he was shooting into manhood, he came under the powerful spell of Hodgson Casson, a man who went throughout the towns and villages in the north of England

like a flame of fire. Just as Collins stood on the threshold of the ministry he received from Henry Breeden words of counsel which have in them the making of an evangelist of the highest type:

'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' What an awful thing it would be if we who are employed about the sanctuary should preach salvation and then go self-damned to hell! Holiness is everything. O, what beauty there is in holiness! Let us seek her, court her, win her, love her, and that for her own sake alone.

There is power in holiness. I want Thomas Collins to have as much of this power as any man under the stars. Stick to your Bible. Be much on your knees. Follow Jesus. Thus get power that will make strong-hearted sinners bend.

I often wish that I had opportunity to converse with you. John Smith had an inheritance from Nelson. I received from Smith. Perhaps I may pass over a little instruction to you. The following hints are echoes of his words:

1. Be a man of decision. An administra-

tor, a popular man, a winner of souls—which is it to be? At Madeley the very worldlings said of Fletcher, 'There goes the soulsaver!' Make up your mind whether you will be a soulsaver or not.

2. If you decide to be one, thenceforth make that your business; be devoted to it; compel everything to bend that way; throw all your energies into it.

3. Be restless. Success is not likely, in our age, to overtake the world's necessities. While we live, we can never have done. Be always tenderly yearning for sinners. This is a happy unhappiness. A man full of Christ-like tears is a noble creature. Such concern melts men, and tells with God.

4. Keep your eye single. Having chosen your aim, be true to it. Do nothing idly or without meaning. Be not of those who do with the right hand and undo with the left.

5. Study the Acts of the Apostles. In those Acts lie the seeds of all evangelistic methods. Cultivate fertility of expedient. In principle be fixed, but in action manifold.

6. In composing sermons, first fix your eye on what you mean to hit. Let nothing in that is not meant to strike. Ask not,

'Is it pretty?' but, 'Will it do the thing I wish?'

7. In selecting the sermon to be preached, consider the people, not yourself; take, not the one that will give you the least trouble, nor the one that will win you, as a preacher, the most credit; but that which is most appropriate to the current need. If the people be hungry, it is better to feed them than dazzle them; even though you were able to do it with the sheen of diamonds.

8. Choose your hymns carefully. Give them out heartily, and with much inward devotion. In your first prayer plead until the people move; wait until the baptism of power falls. You must not preach without the power.

9. Preach as a dying man to dying men. How would you speak if you were sure that in sixty minutes you, with nineteen others from that room, would be in eternity? and at present, of all the score, you only saved? In such a case how would you entreat, and warn, and weep! Do as much like that as you can every time you stand with God's message of mercy among poor, sin-smitten, dying hearers.

10. Never doubt either God's presence, God's word, God's pity, or God's power.

11. During the closing prayer remember that success or failure will be protracted through eternity. Dash jewels to atoms rather than miss your point.

12. If strength permit, marshal the after-meeting yourself. Study the peculiarities and tastes of the people among whom you labour. In mode be pliant. Let not the lion of your will roar about mere methods. Meet prevailing notions of decorum as far as may be consistently with the work being done.

Teach the people to confess what they receive; and, for yourself, watch, pray, and believe.

CHAPTER III

THE EVANGELIST WAITING

INTENSE natures that are impelled by some master-passion are generally tested and schooled. The discipline often consists of disappointed plans, and sometimes of a period of waiting. Both these experiences came to Thomas Collins in these early days, and by them his motives were tested, his convictions deepened, and his ideals changed and exalted. When he was twenty years of age he was accepted as a candidate for the ministry. He was placed on the list of reserve, and specially designated, at his own request, for labour in the foreign field. He felt that his father's public pledge bound him to this course. Summoned to London, he had interviews with the secretaries, and from impressions there received held himself in readiness for a speedy call.

When in London, in the attic of the Mission House, he joined in prayer with some

young men just about to start for the foreign field. It was a melting time. In that hour he himself tells us, 'Their souls were sanctified, their fears scattered, their heads anointed, their hearts fired, and in a few days they were sent flaming off.' He longed to be going with them, but was compelled to wait. His ideals of work abroad were of the purest and loftiest kind. 'Some go abroad that they may be wise; so would I—but wise to win souls. Some to gather gems; so would I—for the Saviour's crown. No mine too deep, and no shore too far, if but I may such treasure gain. Thus I would go, and the Spirit, the Fount of might and comfort, is pledged to be with me. Pentecost did not exhaust the promise. It endures long as the last day. Floods of mercy, deluging all flesh, are yet due.' These bright hopes and anticipations of work for God in distant lands were doomed to disappointment. There was a period of suspense that was very trying to his eager nature. Then it was discovered that the state of his health unfitted him for residence in certain climates; and finally, the action of the Conference changed his course, and

he became a great evangelist in the homeland. When men of burning soul are held back there is always great peril, but he passed through this period of danger unscathed. It was a true fire and not a false flame that was burning within him. Hence he was equal to any kind of providential discipline.

He gave himself to earnest work at Redditch, and was soon found amongst scenes of joyous revival. The early morning hours were devoted to study and prayer; during the day he earned his bread with his own hands, and then devoted the evenings to earnest work for the salvation of the people around him. The circuit membership that year rose from 290 to 400, largely through his own efforts and those of other young men whom he inspired and led.

The President of the Conference then sent him to do mission work in Northumberland. The region and the work to be done are described by himself. 'My journeys often lie along mere sheep-tracks; across bogs where the hollow sound beneath the foot, until you are accustomed to it, is quite alarming; or over barren heaths upon which

you may travel miles without meeting a man or coming in sight of a house. Six times a week the Tyne ferry has to be crossed, and one night the boatman either could not or would not hear my call. It was a case of wade or go back, so I just sought the shallowest place, went in, and came through.'

To tramp thirty miles and preach three times; to be benighted, or at least belated, on foggy moors; to guess his way by starlight, or no light, across swamps that trembled as he trod; and to ford rivers in cold December nights, were difficulties real, and not small. But inured to toil, of vigorous frame and manly courage, I find in him no pulings about these crooks in his lot. He remarks, 'Were complaining of any use, I could fill sheets with that kind of stuff. I find it, however, much better to practise myself in Habakkuk's song: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord: I will joy in the God of my salvation."' He shed tears in plenty over hard hearts, but none over rough roads; he lamented few conversions, but thought little of many miles. Whenever he touched upon these secular trials, it was always done with a merry sprightliness which made

people rather envy his adventures than pity his toils. Thus a correspondent replies: 'While reading your description, I quite fancied myself wandering among Northumbrian scenes and feasting on bannocks of barley-meal. So graphically was all brought before me by your most pleasant, humorous, *exulting* epistle.'

Coming, as Mr. Collins did, from a church fused into one by the fire of revival, the sense of isolation that came over him in Wark was a trial. 'Here,' he says, 'I have neither confidant nor counsellor; no sympathizing spirit with whom I may respire congenial breathings; none to help in efforts of supplication; none to respond to the sighs of grief, share the heart-throbs of hope, or swell with me the song of gratitude. I am alone.

'At home I had friends strong in affection, full of holy sympathy, strangers to suspicion; we trusted each other with the very bottom secrets of our hearts.'

But he set to work with all his heart, and great results followed. All over that wide and rugged area the power of God was manifested.

The first revival outburst was at the watchnight service held on Saturday, December 31, 1831. It was a hallowed season. On New Year's Day a warm, earnest, pleading prayer-meeting occupied the forenoon. At one o'clock Mr. Collins preached with much liberty. During the afternoon a love-feast was held. For number, and for holy fire, no such meeting had ever been held in Wark before. Thanks to God for sending the Methodists there were many and loud. 'I once hated them,' said one, 'but now I should not mind if "Methodist" were printed on my back and on my brow.' Some blessed the Lord for good received under their former preachers, Marshall, Leake, and Coulson. Others, with the joy of souls new born, gave testimony of their more recent conversion. A few bore witness, clear and strong, of the Spirit's sanctifying work within them. The speaking was plentiful and blissful. Mr. Collins writes: 'The earnest breathings after purity and sighs for revival, the frank simplicity and godly sincerity of the Society, both edified me and delighted Mr. Wilson, who had come to help me.'

In this way he filled up the year of waiting by hard toil in different places. The spirit in which he faced the work of his life may be seen in a transcript of his first day's diary in Northumberland:

'October 28, 1831.—Here I am—home left—a new circle entered—a new work before me. My soul trusts in God. Before Him I resolve—

'1. That I will rise early.

'2. That every Sunday morning, upon my knees, I will, in the form prescribed to Methodists for annual use, solemnly renew my covenant with God.

'3. That the whole time before breakfast shall be spent in Bible-searching, meditation, and prayer.

'4. That from breakfast to dinner shall be given to regular and consecutive study.

'5. That the entire afterpart of the day be sacredly devoted to active labour—as visitation, preaching, or the like.

'6. That I will always have some selected text to which—embracing opportunities as they occur—my mind may turn and keep itself profitably practised in the composition of a sermon.

'7. That, unless compelled, I will leave no home without prayer.

'8. That wherever I am received to lodge, I will, if possible, morning and evening, gather all together for united family worship.

'9. That, if I can anyhow reach, I will never miss an appointment.

'10. That I will neither jest, nor trifle, nor waste time in parties.

'11. That I will faithfully rebuke sin wherever I see it.

'12. That I will seek ever to act as one altogether given up to labour for the salvation of the souls of men and the promotion of the work of God.'

He not only made these vows in the secret place before God, but he kept them before man, and that right on to the end of his crowded life. Of no Methodist preacher of the last century could it be more truly said that he was 'altogether given up to labour for the salvation of the souls of men.'

CHAPTER IV

THE EVANGELIST IN CIRCUIT LIFE

It is not our intention to trace the course of this evangelist through every circuit to which he was appointed. Sandhurst, Orkney, Durham, Dudley, Coventry, St. Albans, Camborne, St. Austell, Hemel Hempstead, Bradford, Sowerby Bridge, Leamington, Pontypool, Bristol, had his presence for a longer or shorter period. These circuits present a great variety; they contain different types of people, and many of them covered a very wide area. But they were all scenes of mighty revival. Hop-pickers, fishermen, coal-miners, lead-miners, agriculturists, country-born and town-born people, were equally moved by the intense spiritual passion of this man.

He entered every circuit with a definite policy and intention. He always struck the evangelistic note at the beginning, and

maintained it to the end. Evangelism was not a profession with him, but a spirit, a fire that was always burning on the altar; not a bush that blazed up and then died down, but a bush that was always burning and was never consumed.

Of the Master it is said, 'He offered up prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears.' Paul does not hesitate to use the expressive word 'travail' when he wants to describe the depth and intensity of his yearning for men: 'Ye remember, brethren, our *travail*'; 'My little children, for whom I *travail* in birth again till Christ be formed in you'; 'I would have you know how greatly I *agonize* for you.' These are echoes of the strong words used concerning Christ in Isaiah, 'He shall see of the *travail* of His soul.'

David Brainerd among the Indians wrestled in agony till he was wet all over with sweat. When Henry Martyn reached the shores of India he said, 'I desire to burn out for God.' The Rev. J. H. Jowett, M.A., of Birmingham, has said more recently: 'We cannot heal the needs we do not feel. Tearless hearts can never be heralds of the

passion. We must pity if we would redeem. We must bleed at heart if we would be ministers of the saving blood. The ministers of Calvary must supplicate in bloody sweat, and their intercession must often touch the point of agony.' Collins was in this grand succession of passionate, soul-yearning preachers. His intercessions *for* men and *with* men were with strong cries and tears. In this spirit he entered upon the work of every circuit, and no amount of routine could deaden or destroy his burning zeal.

The itinerant system, which sends a minister to some new sphere every three years, depends for its success on the men who work it. This is true of every system, but it is especially true of the time-limit in the Methodist ministry. This time-limit is all too short for any policy of hesitancy or procrastination. A minister's power throughout the circuit not only depends on the spirit in which he enters it, but on the key-note he strikes during the first few weeks of his pulpit and pastoral work. If a man starts in a perfunctory and routine spirit, reproducing old sermons and walking along beaten tracks, saying, 'I will do nothing

new or striking between Conference and Christmas,' then his failure is assured. The man who does nothing before Christmas will do nothing after. With such men preaching is a profession, and not a passion; ministerial duty a treadmill, and not a triumphant assault upon evil. Time is so short, and the influence of routine is so subtle and enervating, that such men never recover themselves. But when a man keeps the living flame burning in his soul, and remembers that every week of the three years is precious, then his consecrated, spirit-filled personality secures him a victorious course from the first day until the last.

Thomas Collins always began well. His colleagues and his people felt in their first contact with him that he was surcharged with power, and that the business of his life would be to save souls. The flag of evangelism was hoisted as he went into every new sphere, and neither opposition nor weariness ever led him to lower that flag.

He influenced his colleagues in the same direction. The Methodist ministry is an associated ministry. Men do not toil alone, on separate and independent stations; but

two, three, or four brethren are yoked together for doing the work of God in a given area. The superintendent arranges the work of the circuit in consultation with his colleagues. It is of the utmost importance that they all pull together, and that they all pull in the same direction. This unity of spirit and purpose is only maintained by holding regular preachers' meetings. Prayer with each other, candour toward each other, the honest survey of all the work done in the circuit, the mutual interchange of thought and feeling, create a threefold or fourfold bond of love before which all difficulties disappear. The preachers' meeting is the central power-house in circuit life, from which light and heat may be sent into every sanctuary and every home. There is abundant evidence in the journal of Thomas Collins that his relationship with his colleagues was ideal. He lived throughout the time of 'splits' and 'secessions,' when Methodism suffered much. The discontented of those days who wanted to allure the young preachers into other folds were accustomed to say: 'Your superintendents are tyrannical; you will be their subordi-

nates; your liberty will be gone, and you must always obey your superiors. Everything will be done by rigid rule, and your individuality will be repressed and destroyed.' Collins discovered that all this alarm of authority was a mere bugbear. He found in every sphere and in every relationship that love is always the conqueror. Neither his individuality nor his convictions were sacrificed, but they became more marked and intense by communion with men who, though they might differ widely, had one spirit. His good friend Henry Breeden seems to have been a veritable messenger from heaven to him at every critical period of his life. Just as he was on the threshold of the ministry Mr. Breeden sent him the following counsel:

'As a Methodist preacher, be loyal to the order of the Connexion. Never, so long as you remain in the body, willingly break one of its rules. If you were a Churchman, I should tell you to be a true one; if a Baptist, a Baptist; since, then, you are a Methodist, be one. Play the man. The end of Methodism is saving souls. Act toward your superintendent, not as some vain striplings

do, but as becometh a godly junior. Love him, help him, honour him, obey him in the Lord.'

His attitude toward colleagues, and his appreciation of their gifts and graces, shall be told in his own words. In this ministerial association and fellowship he found not only joy but continuous inspiration. 'I never received anything but kindness from Wesleyan ministers.' 'As for myself and my superintendent, we work together; we love one another; and when I show any token of knowing best he makes no trouble of submitting to me.' Of another superintendent he says: 'To have had such a colleague I count among my mercies. He was a benediction in my house, a holy fire in the circuit, and has left a name which through all that region will be fragrant for generations.'

"The Durham ministers work as one heart. We have great confidence in each other. Our preachers' meetings are gracious seasons. Any suggestion that tends to improve the circuit is always welcome. A few weeks ago we, in private communion, partook of the Supper of the Lord. We were

by that service much knit together and refreshed.'

In another case he says: 'My colleague is an Institution man, most amiable in manners and likely to draw many souls to Jesus by cords of love. He is an excellent preacher; works with me well; has begun to fast on Friday; pleads for success, and is a ready-minded man for all good things.'

These words come to us from different periods of his life, and they refer to his association with widely different men, so that we see he worked harmoniously with men of widely different gifts, and inspired each of them with his own spirit. The arrangements in the Methodist Church often bring together a great variety of talent and temperament. In one circuit you may have one man who is pre-eminently a preacher, another a teacher, a third a pastor, a fourth an organizer. They are called by the same Master, are subject in every respect to the same church authority, and they minister to the same congregations. So that two things are necessary to the success of their mutual toil: first, they should work in harness;

second, each man should retain and impress his own individuality on the circuit. In this way alone can the full benefits of an associated ministry be realized by the people. One man fulfils what the others lack. The whole moveth by that which every joint supplieth. There is abundant evidence that Mr. Collins had a sincere and chivalrous appreciation of men widely different from himself. At the same time he cultivated his own special gifts, kept the fire steadily burning in his own nature, and tried to inspire his comrades in service with his own intense evangelism.

Evangelism is not inconsistent with any other gift. It should suffuse, direct, and give fruitfulness to every other kind of mental and moral equipment. The preacher should be an *evangelistic* preacher; the teacher an *evangelistic* teacher; the pastor an *evangelistic* pastor; the organizer an *evangelistic* organizer; each man delivering in his own way a message that will bring sin-burdened and sorrow-laden men into instantaneous and conscious union with Jesus Christ. Barristers differ very widely as to their gifts and their style. They vary in their methods of

cross-examination, and in their pleading; but it is the business of every barrister to win a verdict for his client. So is it with the preacher of the gospel. Whatever his gifts may be, he must use them for the purpose of winning a verdict on the spot in favour of Jesus Christ. No regular ministry is ever complete that does not give men a definite opportunity of embracing salvation. This does not mean the shading down or the loss of personality. It really means the intensifying of personality. Evangelism will work along the lines of a man's own temperament. The fact is that naturalness is one of the first elements of powerful evangelism. The preacher who really and experimentally holds the great evangelical truths will necessarily be evangelistic. The man's own self will become the channel or medium along which God comes to others. Surely when the heart has experienced the great truths about salvation, when the words Forgiveness, Renewal, Sonship, Purity are realities in the inner life, when the man can say truly, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost,' then he is bound to be an evangelist, whatever his gifts and temperament may be. Peter,

James, John, Stephen, and Paul were men of widely different temperaments and gifts, but they were all of them, in every place, powerful evangelists.

This power is not an animal magnetism. It is not a question of temperament, neither is it an intellectual endowment. It is a gift from the other world, and is the result of personal consecration to Christ. Every man may have this mysterious power if he will pay the price for it. Jesus Christ is the only source from whence this Holy Unction comes, and our possession of it depends upon our nearness to Him. We read that in the days of His flesh 'He called the disciples and chose the twelve; and a great multitude of the people came, and He healed them. He opened His mouth and taught them, for power came forth from Him.' The power healed the people and surcharged the twelve. Peter was so full of it that the people brought their handkerchiefs to touch him, and believed that if his shadow passed on them it would give healing and life. We have known rare souls in our own day so full of the influence that they were a radiating force wherever they moved.

Their very presence inspired hope in dark, despairing hearts.

This power is bestowed on every kind of gift, that each gift may be turned to its fullest and grandest use. But it is only bestowed by the living and glorified Saviour on those who are in intimate vital union with Him, and who are wholly surrendered to His will. We may go back to the Christ of Palestine for teaching and human example, but we must go up to the living, enthroned Christ for divine inspiration and power. It was this power from the ascended Christ that first of all filled the life of Thomas Collins, and then overflowed from him to his colleagues, and then to all his circuit officers and people. This divine influence is infectious, and ministers who possess it are always a blessing to their brethren. Many a colleague had a warmer heart because he communed in the preachers' meeting with Thomas Collins. One of them says, 'I always felt as if a live conscience was sitting at my elbow.' The same spirit of zeal and enterprise breathed itself into all his circuit workers. Speaking of some of them at Sandhurst he said, 'There are some rare

jewels in this circuit—fine fellows; they know how to lift when I flag. Many, both of the leaders and local preachers, are men of flame.'

Under this influence every man used his gifts for the highest end; and, what was more, their united zeal overflowed the ordinary and regular channels of circuit duty. Time-worn customs and traditions that left no play for enthusiasm and enterprise were broken down. The circuit plan may be a necessity when there are a number of ministers exercising pastoral oversight over a still greater number of congregations, but even a circuit plan may become a curse. When it leads to measured, mechanical toil, when it is used as a maximum limit of the work that is to be done, then it damps down enthusiasm, represses individuality, and becomes a hindrance to the work of God. Methodist preachers in circuit life are not horses in a mill, each one going the same round, and going that round in the same step. We sometimes hear of earnest men who kick over the traces, and we do not always blame them. Traces are good when they are so arranged that men can freely

and joyfully pull in the same direction, but when they are chains that cramp and fetter the splendid spontaneous energies of earnest men, we must not wonder if restiveness and rebellion manifest themselves. In the preachers' meeting the work of the circuit is arranged, and in the right sort of preachers' meeting it is so arranged that while the regular and necessary work is provided for, there is always scope for those exuberant energies and enthusiasms which possess the hearts of men who are baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Enthusiasms so enkindled will not only fill the channels we dig for them, but there will be overflowings of power. We do not hesitate to say that there are ministers, circuits, and congregations that need an emancipation from the thraldom of methods that were excellent in their day, but which are now obsolete. Not the emancipation which comes of wilful rebellion against all rule and authority, but that glorious emancipation which comes when all men are so filled with power from on high that they overflow in every direction. If men do the work of an evangelist in the regular round of duty, and then, like true

evangelists, go outside that regulated round of duty in order to carry the war into hostile territory, there will be a triumphant and continuous evangelism in every chapel and in every circuit.

CHAPTER V

THE EVANGELIST IN THE PULPIT: HIS MESSAGE

THE evangelist is a man with an evangel—i.e. a gospel, a real message of good tidings to men. This message, and the manner in which it is proclaimed, will determine the immediate and the permanent success of his evangelism. If a man succeeds merely in pleasing the fancy, or even in stirring the emotions of his hearers, he may have a temporary, skin-deep success, but not a genuine salvation work. It is only by the presentation of great fundamental truths that men can be shaken from their indifference, convinced of the sinfulness of sin, and led into the joy of conscious salvation. 'Confections' and 'sweetmeats' will never blast the rocks, clear away rubbish, lay stable foundations, or build up a Church whose walls are salvation and whose gates are praise.

In the case of Thomas Collins we are not left in the slightest doubt, either as to his gospel or the spirit and power in which he proclaimed it. His message was definite, joyful, tender, direct, heart-searching, experimental. He proclaimed great, positive, essential truths, and he proclaimed them with the clear ring of assurance. There was nothing fanciful in his selection of themes, and nothing hesitating in his presentation of them. The following texts are selected from the earlier periods of his ministry:

'Repent ye, and believe the gospel.'

'What must I do to be saved?'

'Ye must be born again.'

'We preach Christ crucified.'

'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.'

'Behold the Lamb of God.'

'The Mighty Saviour.'

'Able to save to the uttermost.'

'Prepare to meet thy God.'

A selection from the later period shows that sin and salvation were the burden of his message right on to the end.

'A Lamentation over Sinners.'

'The Bearer of our Griefs.'
'The Pardoner of Sin.'
'The Gracious Name of God.'
'The Christian's Way into the Holiest.'
'The Privilege of Saints.'

As Coley pithily says, 'Here are no metaphysical subtleties; no themes suggestive of doubtful questions; no battle-cries of school divinity; no pegs to hang fancies on; no texts selected on account of their special fitness for fine sermon-writing.' He never suggested doubts and misgivings for the sake of trying to answer them. His aim was to convince sinners, to exalt the power of the Saviour, and to lead men through repentance and faith to holiness.

His own mind was stored with these great truths at the beginning of his ministry. He carefully studied great books. On his book-list as a probationer in the ministry we find: *Systematic Theology*—Barrow, Burnet, Pearson, and Wesley; *Experimental Divinity*—Mason, Horneck, Shaw, Alleine, Rutherford, Edmondson; *Exposition*—Benson, Sutcliffe, Watson; *Christian Evidence*—Robinson and Butler. The prayerful and systematic study of these great Christian writings made him

definite in his own doctrinal position and mighty in his use of the Scriptures.

In all the periods of great spiritual awakening, when conversions have been numerous and startling, the chosen instrument of the Holy Spirit has been the Word of God, and especially the great truths of that word which circle round the crucified and risen Christ. Repentance, justification, regeneration, holiness, have always been and can only be produced by keeping before men's minds the Cross, with its blood-red message of sin and love, and the Mount of Ascension, with its enduement of power. The gospel that begins and ends at Nazareth, or even at Bethany, may soothe the heart, but will not save and satisfy it. Calvary, with its redemption by blood; Olivet, with its promise of power; and Pentecost, with its living flame, are essential to mighty, triumphant evangelism.

What was the evangel of the pentecostal and early Christian ages? The very heart and essence of Peter's preaching is found in the words, 'Whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead'; 'This Jesus God hath raised up'; 'Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted'; 'God hath

made this same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ'; 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole.' Philip the evangelist began at the chapter in Isaiah where both the crucified and enthroned Christ are foretold, and preached salvation to the Ethiopian eunuch. It was a vision of the risen Christ that changed Saul the persecutor into Paul the apostle, and made him glory in the power of the Cross and of the Resurrection.

In the Reformation days, Luther in Germany, Latimer and Ridley in England, and John Knox in Scotland, shook Romanism, with its penances, pilgrimages, and performances, to its centre, by proclaiming pardon for sinners through faith in the death and intercession of Jesus. It was the preaching of Christ, the atoning, interceding, reigning Christ, without an intervening priest, sacrifice, or ceremony, that saved Europe from the intellectual and spiritual thraldom of popery.

The Methodist revival of the eighteenth century was marked by great preaching

on great themes. Redemption through the blood of Christ, regeneration and sanctification through the power of the divine Christ and by the agency of the divine Spirit, were iterated and reiterated by Wesley and Whitefield. The once crucified but risen Christ was the centre and heart and life of every sermon.

The great evangelists in what may be called the middle period of Methodist history, when the greatest triumphs of our Church were won, were men who proclaimed a definite and glorious evangel. A careful study of the sermons left by Benson, Bradburn, Bunting, Coke, Newton, Watson, and others of their time will show that they did not preach an emasculated gospel. They offered a conscious and complete salvation to men through Jesus Christ, who became obedient unto death, but who has now a name which is above every name. And if we come to the most successful of our modern evangelists in all the Churches, we find they preached from great themes, and always with a note of certainty.

The most recent and hope-inspiring development in modern Methodism illustrates

the same important lesson. Our great mission-halls are moving London, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Nottingham, Bristol, and other places, not in the first instance by their social movements, nor by their homely, unconventional services, but by the preaching of a Christ who can save to the uttermost because He ever liveth to make intercession for men. Sinners can only be lifted out of their degradation, and Churches can only be kept on their conquering march, by a Saviour on whose vesture and thigh are written the words, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.'

There has been much of evangelism, so-called, which has not led to the salvation of great sinners, to the pulling down of mighty strongholds, or the permanent reformation of entire neighbourhoods, because it has failed at this point. How can men be made conscious of their sin, and made ashamed of their sin, except by being brought face to face with Christ upon the Cross and Christ upon the Throne? 'They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him.' 'Him hath God exalted . . . a Prince and a Saviour, to give

repentance unto Israel, and the remission of their sins.' How can men who are lame, lamed mentally and morally from their birth, get strength in their feet and ankle-bones except through the power of the enthroned Christ? Men may preach much about sin, and the punishment of sin, as Thomas Collins did; but, like him, they must remember that a sense of the awfulness of sin, and the certainty of hell, as well as the desire to escape from both, are most effectively produced by the preaching of the vicarious atonement and the divine lordship of Jesus Christ.

There may be much to do in the way of social reconstruction, and there are many 'sayings of Jesus' that will help in that direction; but the man who prates about a new social kingdom without pointing to the absolute necessity of personal regeneration soon makes us weary of his prating. *New men* are to constitute the new kingdom, and they must be new men in Christ Jesus.

And there is just as little hope for men in what many are saying to-day about 'the Sermon on the Mount.' True, it is a perfect piece of ethics, an ideal code of morals both

for the individual and for society ; but never let us forget that the Sermon on the Mount is not the gospel of a social reformer—it is the gospel of a King. Every sentence in that sermon brings home to honest hearts the conviction that only kingly power can bring them into His new Kingdom, by making men pure, peace-loving, prayerful, and lowly. Yes, it is the gospel of the King that is the keynote of mighty evangelism in every age.

This gospel of the King is a joyful message. Dr. Campbell Morgan has said : ' There is no note of sadness in an evangel. ' There is not a note of terror in an evangel. An evangel is good news. The preacher may have to discuss the subject of sin, and also to proclaim the punishment of sin, but he will not end his message with such denunciation. He proclaims God's evangel when he announces the fact that Christ is able to save from sin, and consequently from its penalty.'

This exactly describes the evangelism of Thomas Collins. Few men have ever denounced sin with greater emphasis than he did ; indeed, he did more than that, for he relentlessly assailed, not only sin in general, but *particular* sins. His preaching was like

the holding up of a mirror, in which men saw themselves just as they really were. He condemned the sins of the gutter, and also the highly-polished drawing-room sins of educated people. But he did not stop there, for with him sin and salvation were always proclaimed with one and the same breath. 'Mighty to save,' 'Able to save to the uttermost,' were the messages that filled sin-stricken hearts with hope and gladness and joy. What is there more joyful than the promise of salvation through a risen, omnipotent Saviour? It is this that gives strength and gladness to the evangelist's message, and it is this alone that can inspire hope in the hearts of despairing sinners. It is sometimes said that emphasis should be placed in the first instance on the man's sins in order that he may be brought to feel his need of salvation. Other preachers insist that the emphasis should be placed upon Christ and salvation, because this is the shortest and surest way of making the man feel the reality and heinousness of his sin. In our judgement the sin and the salvation should never be separated in the preacher's message. Whether we examine the methods

of the New Testament days or modern times we find that the greatest evangelists never portray sin without holding up the Cross of Christ, and they never preach a dying, interceding, reigning Saviour without leading men to confess and abandon their sins. The dominant note, however, will be joyful and hope-inspiring. Unless it is, the message will not be the proclamation of an evangel, but the pronouncing of a doom.

CHAPTER VI

THE EVANGELIST IN THE PULPIT : HIS METHODS

THE proclamation of this evangel must always be *a direct, heart-searching appeal to the individual.* Exposition of texts and elucidation of the truth must lead on to straight, heart-searching personal appeal to the man. We have gained much by our modern improved methods of sermonizing. In most cases 'the elaborate introduction' has been dropped with great advantage. Then the scaffolding which helps to build the sermon is not so much revealed to the hearers as in other days. All this, we believe, is good. We can never, however, dispense with the direct personal application of the truth if we would there and then bring men to the acceptance of Jesus Christ. There was *directness of purpose* in the life of Thomas Collins. Let us illustrate this by reproducing the words of his kinsman :

'Walking with God and working for God,

his life had unity. He had no desire to be considered a many-sided man. He made no pretensions to that breadth of thought, in praise of which the cant of to-day is so loud. Much of it is broad as the unbounded air, and as thin. The life we are looking upon was directed by a single aim. His early resolve—I have it under his own hand—was, "*The solemn one thing of my life shall be to save souls.*" To that determination he was true. To that he devoted all.

'For this, family visits were postponed. He writes: "I love you, and long to see you; but, O, my work! my work! I cannot leave it. Souls! souls! desire for souls swallows me up."

'For this, seducing popular calls were rejected. "I receive many invitations for anniversaries, but am refusing them all, because of the anxiety I feel to confirm the numerous young converts in this circuit."

'For this, sight-seeing was neglected. All the diaries of that period furnish record of but one. Nor was that undertaken for himself. He took his sister to Battle Abbey. The narrative of the excursion, after, in a sentence, humorously alluding to doubtful

antiquities which the cicerone eulogizes to visitors there, at once dismisses scene and ruin, and hastens to tell of the Word which he that evening preached in the little town, and of the sinners God saved. I have, indeed, heard him tell one other case; but it shows, even more strongly than the last, the sway of the ruling passion of his heart. After a week-day morning service, with three or four of his fervent friends, he ascended the tower of Tenterden church. When there, they were more taken with the look of the bell-room as a choice oratory for prayer than as an observatory for landscape. Thinking it suitable employment for a consecrated place, they fell to devotion, depending on the thick walls to ensure privacy, forgetting that belfrys are constructed to let sound out. Confused noise coming down from the height of that old tower seemed portentous. What could it mean? It caused some fear and more curiosity among the neighbours. The old sexton, soon remembering to whom he had lent his keys, roused himself, conveyed his heavy flesh, with pantings not a few, up to them, and with much authority, and more

ire, broke up the unlicensed conventicle, dismissing, without a benediction, the daring Methodists, in a speech rather to be described as forcible than elegant.

'Intense lover of the beautiful I know that Mr. Collins was; yet so, at that time, did a stronger love absorb him, that, though dwelling in the very garden of England, allusions to scenery in the Journal are almost as rare as in the Wellington dispatches: like them, they are bulletins of battle, registers of march, and struggle, and victory.

'This limitation—call it narrow, call it rigid, call it what you please—how strong it made him! Men of "*one thing*" are mighty. What marks they leave! If the purpose to which they restrict themselves be the noblest and the best, then each who chooses it becomes, what Thomas Collins was, a blessing from heaven among men.'

There was also *directness of aim in preaching and in the whole service.* When Collins heard Charles Spurgeon preach at Surrey Gardens, he said, 'He spoke vital truth, he spoke out, and he spoke home.' This fairly describes his own style of preaching throughout the whole of his ministry.

Hearers often felt as though this man had unlocked their whole lives and was revealing them to others. Here is a case. The text was Dan. iv. 27, 'Break off thy sins by righteousness.' Mr. Collins, in pithy words, showed how sinners should break off their sins: *short off; all off; clear off.* As one close-fitting truth after another was uttered, the hearer felt indignant, thinking that the preacher had been informed of his misconduct; but, when afterwards assured that no such thing had been done, he said, 'Well, it is clear, then, if you did not tell him, God did; for that sermon, every word of it, was to me.' He not only signed the pledge forthwith, but also set himself earnestly to seek the Lord.

The following description of a service conducted at Coventry would apply to almost every service he conducted: 'The service commenced with that appropriate hymn, beginning:

> Give me the faith which can remove
> And sink the mountain to a plain;
> Give me the child-like praying love,
> Which longs to build Thy house again;
> Thy love let it my heart o'erpower,
> And all my simple soul devour.

'As he gave the lines, force, beauty, and impressiveness, never perceived by me before, seemed to breathe through the words. Then followed a prayer so pleading, so child-like, and yet so mighty, that all believing hearts felt assured that revival was already begun. The discourse, founded upon Deut. xxxiii. 8–11, was original, unique, and stimulating. In the evening, the warnings of the unconverted, the invitations of the penitent, and the appeals for present exercise of faith, had directness and unction such as none of us had known before.'

A scholar and a gentleman, who was sometimes an auditor, said, 'All your discourses seem to be about me. None other, that ever I hear, get inside me as yours do.'

And these heart-searching personal appeals were always intended to bring about immediate results. A favourite illustration of his was, 'Going home without a prayer-meeting after the sermon is like a sportsman who has shot at the birds, but *not stopped to bag the game.*'

But evangelism that is direct and heart-searching should always be *tender*. Thomas Collins could so use the Word of God that

sometimes it was a hammer and sometimes a sword, but he could be also tender as a woman. The rough fidelity, stern rebuke, and Boanerges' thunder of his early days softened down ; and instead of that there was tender pathos, that gave at times wonderful sweetness to his preaching. His constant communion with God and his contact with human sorrow and sin inflamed his soul with love and melted it with pity. He had what has been recently called 'the wooing note,' as well as the voice of thunder. Let the following extract from one of his sermons illustrate the point. The text was, 'The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'

'As I sat in the railway carriage, we stopped at Weedon ; a soldier's wife, from the barracks there, came in, with two young children and an infant at the breast. Novelty, noise, and motion much excited the children who were not "in arms" ; the one there, busy drawing life from her life, lifted but his eyes to meet her kindly look. The sudden whistle, which warned us of an approaching tunnel, startled him somewhat ; but her quiet glance of love assured him

again, and he sank back to nestle in her embrace. The tunnel was long, and when we emerged I observed that little one *asleep !* Then, in my heart, I prayed : "So, O my Father, may I repose upon Thy bosom and under Thine eye. So, as I enter the valley of death, may I fall asleep upon Thine arms, to awake and find myself with Thee in the light of eternity ! "

' " Everlasting arms " are " beneath thee." Jeshurun, rest upon them : rest upon thy God. One Sabbath I entered the cottage of a good man, and said : " Well, James, is your soul joying in God to-day ? " " Indeed, no. My mind is clouded, my prayer feeble, and my heart cold. I can, however, still conscientiously say that I hate sin, and, though with many fears that it will master me, strive against it." " You want perfect love, James." " I do, I feel I do." " Have it, then." " Is not that what I wish ? Is not that what I am trying for ? " " Yes, James, you have *tried* too much, and *trusted* too little. Here ; read this :

Round thee and beneath are spread
The everlasting arms.

Whose arms?" "God's." "Where spread?" "Around my soul and underneath." "Why, man, say you so? Sink down upon them, then, and *rest!*" "I will try." "James! James! there you are again; trying instead of trusting. Suppose you placed your child in the cradle, and said, 'Now, dear one, rest,' would you expect the little one to set itself shaking the cradle, and to say, 'I am trying'? Would he rest so?" "No, sir, he must *be still* to rest." "And so must you, James. Tell God, 'Thou art mine, and I am Thine.' Cast thyself on His fidelity: sink down upon Him, and, on an arm firmer than rock, tenderer than a mother's, thou shalt rest."'

At the conclusion of this sermon, filled with things deep, touching, and very beautiful, the communion-rail at a word was surrounded by seekers.

A man may preach the awful verities of the Word, but he should preach them with tenderness. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we are not to denounce men, nor to bully men, but to *persuade* men. The persuasion is irresistible when there are tears in the voice. Dr. Dale of Birmingham

once said to Dr. Campbell Morgan, 'I think I have only known one evangelist that I felt had the right to speak of a lost soul, and he was D. L. Moody. This was because he never spoke of the possibility of a man being lost without tears in his voice.' The note that breaks men's hearts and sweeps them to Christ is always a love-note

> The love of Christ doth me constrain,
> To seek the wandering souls of men;
> With *cries, entreaties, tears* to save,
> And snatch them from the gaping grave.

He preached *an experimental gospel.* Always and in every place he believed in and preached for *instantaneous, thorough conversions.* Conversion as he understood it was a conscious, blessed, life-transforming thing. His regular ministry was a soul-converting ministry; but in addition to this, when the harvest became ripe in any sphere, he conducted his own revival services. At Dudley we find that, night after night for a whole week, cries for mercy rose in all directions. Here, a child of pious parents; there, a chapel-going moralist; yonder, a backslider. Here, an ignorant collier;

there, a fire-tanned puddler; yonder, a burly navvy. But not only sons of toil, sons of shame were weeping there. The very riff-raff of society, blacklegs, drunkards, and fighting men, lay smitten at His dear feet, whose might alone can 'gather such outcasts in, and save from sin and Satan's power.' Hours passed in prayer. Forty-two new witnesses of grace were registered. All through the week the impulse continued; souls were saved every day, and, at its close, Mr. Collins triumphantly records, 'I have no doubt that *one hundred* have been given to us.'

His constant desire was that conversions should be *thorough*, as well as numerous and startling. Mr. Coley's remarks on this point are well worth quoting:

'The salvation of a soul is heart-work, not head-work. It begins with a broken heart, it becomes a peaceful heart, it issues in a holy heart. Salvation cannot be learned off, or got by rote. "Did Jesus die for all men?" "Yes." "Are not you a man?" "Yes." "Then did not Jesus die for you?" "Yes." "Do you believe that?" "Yes." "Is it not true that he that believeth shall

be saved?" "Yes." "You believe: then, clearly, you are saved."

'Ah! this salvation by syllogism is a delusion. "Jesus died for me," minified into the mere premiss of an argument en an impenitent lip, is as worthless as any shibboleth bigot ever framed. Precious truths so held are in *mortmain*, and are harvestless as seed corn in a mummy's hand. Thousands can get through the narrow steps of that poor mental exercise only to realize that in its bosom lies a sophism, and that its conclusion is a lie.

'Woe befalls any church multiplied by such accessions; as John Bunyan would say, "They have tumbled over the wall, not come in at the wicket-gate." A gospel minus repentance, a salvation without conviction of sin, a faith without trust, an assurance by logic, and a religion without holiness—what will it all issue in but an eternity without hope?'

Errors of this kind—very rife to-day—were in existence then. Subjoined, with brief answers appended, are questions sent to Mr. Collins, during that period of strife, by some of his polemic friends.

Q. Why consume time in preaching such A B C as that men should forsake their sins ?

A. Because we care rather to be right than to be quick. Saving time by leaving out God's commandment, 'Cease to do evil,' might lose eternity.

Q. But supposing that they do, as you tell them, forsake their sins—will doing so save them ?

A. No. But not doing so would damn them. A thing not in itself saving may yet be necessary to salvation. Though the first step does not finish a journey, yet none can reach the goal who will not take it. The query is of no force against preaching this, but, it is allowed, has resistless force against permitting preaching to stop short at this.

Q. Until faith be exercised in Jesus as a Saviour, are they not, whatever else has been done, unjustified and unregenerate ? And if unjustified and unregenerate, what better, or safer, Godward, will they be for leaving one, or more, or all their outward abominations ?

A. No better, if that forsaking be made ground of self-dependence and practical Christ-refusal; but much better, quibble

about it who may, if done by divine aid, in submission to divine will. Undoubtedly the putting away of sin—the penitent 'clearing of themselves,' denotes a state far better than they were in when their life was vice and their purpose rebellion. Though not cured, they are surrendered to treatment; the physician has them in hand.

Q. Is not all this telling a man to repent mere delaying of him from the cross?

A. Nay, it is in front of the cross, and with motives fetched from the cross, that I urge him to repent.

Q. But if you have him there, with Jesus in view, why not tell him to believe?

A. I do so tell him. But ordering my requirement of faith after God's own method, I claim it first for the divine statements concerning wretched, damnable, helpless self; and then for the record given of His Son. Conviction of sin is a necessary antecedent of saving trust. Who seeks food until he is hungry? or shelter until he apprehends danger? or medicine until he knows himself to be sick? Seeing that men will neither seek, nor care for, nor accept a Saviour until they feel themselves to be sinners,

with this we begin—this testimony we press home—this word of God we will have believed; then, presenting the crucified Lord, as Paul teaches, 'The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.'

Q. You talk as if 'reconciliation' were a thing divinely willed merely. Does not Paul (2 Cor. v. 19–21) teach that it is accomplished? God *is* reconciled. Why do you maim the message? Why do you not tell that gospel—that good news—everywhere—to every man?

A. We should be sorry to clip or cloud the magnificence of God's free love, yet let us not confuse things. God was reconciled *to the world* in Christ eighteen centuries ago; *to me* when in the act and moment of faith I accepted Christ. Reconciliation to humanity was planned in eternity, justified on Calvary, proclaimed in the gospel, and is true for ever. Reconciliation with individual men is accomplished, realized, and experienced, when sin is renounced, the Saviour embraced, and the gospel trusted. Atonement was accepted *from Christ* the moment He offered it; accepted *for me* the moment I claim it.

Q. Why pray for faith? Why pray for that which the Bible calls upon you to do?

A. Dare you go through with that principle—never to pray for anything which the Bible calls upon you to do? The fact is, through the whole process of salvation, God is a giver and man a receiver. It may foreclose controversy, however, to remember that faith is prayed for in one sense, and exercised in another. The Holy Ghost gives not the act of faith, but the light, power, and disposition to believe. In that, as—and only as—in every other acceptable act, 'He helpeth our infirmities.' Why should not this fact be devotionally acknowledged? If I may pray for love, or joy, or the like, why may I not pray for faith?

Mr. Collins often met, as Paul did at Ephesus, nominal members, who made great professions but had no piety. He always probed their hearts and pressed them to present decision for Christ. Take a specimen case that occurred in a Bradford class:

'Have you peace with God?' 'No, sir.' 'How long have you been among God's people?' 'Fifteen years.' 'Fifteen years!

Ah, I see how it has been : *ding, dong, bell ; ding, dong, bell.* Ordinances round and round, but no divine conviction of sin ; no tears at the Saviour's feet ; no clasping of the Crucified ; no agonizing resolve, " Lord, I will not let Thee go." How long is this inertness to last ? Down on your knees, man.' Stung to earnestness by admonition so strong and faithful, the laggard of all those years knelt, and wept, and wrestled, and prevailed, and home he went that night a happy man.

He believed with the same earnestness, and preached with the same persistence, *the possibility of full salvation from sin.* Conversion was only a first step on the way to perfect holiness of heart and life. Entire sanctification as an inward experience and as a daily life was to himself a real experience, and he constantly explained it and urged it upon others.

His own life proclaimed this doctrine. Those who knew him and knew him best declare that they never saw holiness so perfect, beautiful, and impressive in a living type. Affliction chastened his rugged might into gentleness, and his conversations and

sermons on holiness were melting and profound. The Rev. Samuel Coley thus describes the effect of a mighty service, not only upon a large congregation but upon his own life and ministry :

'Sunday, October 10, 1841, will ever be dear to me. It was my earliest opportunity of enjoying the teaching of this beloved kinsman. His morning text in Tipton Chapel was Jer. xiii. 27, "Wilt thou not be made clean ? When shall it once be ?" Unction richer than was wont, even to him, came down. Such power I had never felt under any ministry, nor, after the lapse of these years, have I ever yet again experienced anything approaching to it. The Journal of the date beautifully says : "There was such a shaking and such a cry that I could not finish my sermon ; it seemed as though every child of God would get his Father's image there and then." These simple words I will somewhat supplement. At the urging of the query : "'When shall it once be ?' The loving Father says, 'Now'; what do you say ?" "Now" breathed audibly from pew to pew. "The Son who gave His cleansing blood says,

'Now'; what do you say?" At this reiteration of appeal, "*Now*," louder and more earnest, circled me in answer. "The waiting Sanctifier, the Spirit of Holiness, says, 'Now'; what do you say? when?" Twice the response, though it moved my inmost heart, had passed, leaving me, trained in the school of order, silent; but with that third questioning came a gush of influence irresistible. I could keep my lips no longer, but, like the rest, cried, "Now!" What is more, and better far, my soul, that blessed moment, as certainly said, "Now," as did my tongue. It was no flash of enthusiasm; it was a work of the Holy Ghost. Its force is still unexpended. That "Now" stirs me yet. Nor ever since that memorable time has my faith dared to procrastinate, or say anything but "Now" to all sanctifying offers of the promise-keeping God. As the Diary, in such simple words, indicates, the sermon was "swallowed up in victory." Seekers left their pews, and trooping, uncalled, up the aisles, knelt around the communion rail. Thus, unexpectedly, that morning service developed into a prayer-meeting—one of the most pleading and triumphant I ever knew.'

The daughter of Mr. Collins has supplied us with letters that were evidently not in the hands of Mr. Coley. They were written to his wife's sister, who, though a member of the Anglican Church, shared his intimate friendship. There were strong spiritual affinities binding them together, and the correspondence gives some revelations of the private personal yearning felt by Mr. Collins for the more abundant life.

'*November* 26, 1846.

'This is a charming morning, after rain and misty weather; and what a beautiful morning issues from the face of Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, pouring forth for ever the glory of God. Let us walk out and enjoy it. "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." Many Christians are invalids, sitting in a little dark parlour, with tender eyes, and a green shade over them, and a thick dark curtain before the window; if you go towards the window they say, "Do, pray, leave the curtain alone, the light oppresses me"; but dear ——, if we are children of the light and of the day, let us enjoy our inheritance. Let us walk in the light of the Lord. Let

us have the whole sky of heavenly knowledge, heavenly purity, and heavenly joy. He is full of light who can always see the face of Jesus, and he need not look away from that face for one moment, since by reflections from that face he will see all he needs to see respecting heart, path, duty, danger, privilege, and prospect. Look unto Me and be saved. He who always looks is always saved. And he who always looks to Jesus, always looks to himself. Having said thus far, I will say now, dear ——, one word more. I enjoy perfect love to God as a free gift received by faith in truth springing from grace. My master passion is to glorify Christ, make Him famous, get His name up in the salvation of sinners. This glorifies Christ. Convert a man, and you set his bell 'ringing for Christ, his flag flying for Christ. His talk and walk now glorify Christ.'

'*July* 30, 1847.

'We are one in Christ, and we live upon the promise of the fullness of the Spirit. Let us ever honour God by believing not only that He made the promise, but that He performs it to us *to-day* and *now*. Look at

Rom. iv. 18–20. 1. "Believing according to that which is spoken." 2. Strong faith asks not the help of human probability, but goes *against hope*. Nay, strong faith makes nothing of impossibilities, whether in yourself or out of yourself—whether in Abraham or Sarah. Further, strong faith is not afraid of the promise because of its magnificence. "Too good for me," "Too great for me," "You may, but not I," &c.—this is not the talk of strong faith. It is quite enough that what God hath promised He is able also to perform. 3. Faith is weakened by our looking for probabilities to be with us, by our dwelling upon difficulties, and by our not claiming *all* the promise. Let us habituate ourselves to believe continually for all that is in that word, "I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." "My God in Christ, I claim all that is in that word now, on the account of my Elder Brother, Thine own Son—I claim it all, and believe that Thou givest all. Eternal glory to Thee."'

The holiness he preached was not a counsel of perfection, but a veritable experience and life—not for the few who were

richly endowed with moral qualities, but for all. Not for parade days and state occasions, but for every moment of every life.

Men are to-day clamouring for an ethical and social gospel. If they mean that the old type of revivalism was not ethical and social, then we differ from them. The gospel preached by all the great evangelists from Peter and Paul until now has been ethical and social. It transformed men's lives, lifting the beggars from the dunghill and setting them among princes. It not only made their souls happy, but their lives beautiful, first saving the man and then reconstructing his surroundings. That type of evangelism will be wanted until there is a new heaven and a new earth wherein will dwell eternal righteousness.

CHAPTER VII

THE EVANGELIST OUT OF THE PULPIT

WHEN evangelism is not a profession, but a spirit, it will pervade the whole life. It will not content itself with great 'set' occasions, when Churches are organized for some supreme effort, neither will it confine itself to pulpit ministrations; but it will seize every opportunity of claiming men one by one for Christ. The evangelist who keeps near to the Cross will have a true sense of the value of one soul. As our Lord talked with the woman at Jacob's well, and as Philip, guided by the Spirit, went and met the eunuch in the desert, and as Ananias sought for Saul of Tarsus in Simon's house, so every true evangelist will count it an inestimable joy to seek and save men in quiet, unseen places.

Thomas Collins led many a soul to Christ on *the lonely way*. In his circuits the

roadsides and field-paths were often scenes of salvation. These instances were numerous at every period of his life. Returning from Cranbrook, Mr. Collins was overtaken by a person of sober, steady look; brief intercourse discovered the man to be of thoughtful, serious mind, wishful for good, but uninstructed in the simplicities of the gospel offer. Telling him, as they journeyed, the story of Philip and the eunuch, he assured him that there and then, like the eunuch, he might believe on the Son of God and be saved. Opening up to him at length the saving plan, he plied him with the duty of present submission to the evangelical conditions, and earnestly appealed to him at once to put his trust in the Saviour. Nor was this exhortation vain. Before they reached the village towards which they went, the man was rejoicing in the bliss of accepted salvation.

Another day Mr. Collins met a person of the name of Morgan on the road to Mountfield. To godly converse the man gave earnest heed. As they walked, attention deepened into desire; desire intensified to distress; to the distressed soul the gospel

was explained, and with prayer pressed home; and there, in that rural lane, willingly as if it had been a cathedral, God sealed His Word, and sent the villager to his cottage, filled with unspeakable joy, ever to look back upon that as the birth-hour of a new life.

No one was too lowly for his notice. A maiden who, by her mistress, was permitted to spend each alternate Sabbath with her parents, was known by him to be in penitential sorrow. He writes: 'As it was her *liberty Sunday*, I just ran down, between the preachings, to her father's house to converse with her.' It was a scene of struggle, tears, and agonies; but, poor girl, it proved at length to be 'liberty Sunday' indeed to her, for her soul was set free. Her father was the first in the movement to bring Wesleyans there. God rewarded him. 'Five of his children,' says Mr. Collins, 'are already saved; and he will not rest till Jesus has them all.'

No chance was thrown away: 'Robert Henderson came to take an order for slippers; while with me, knowing him to be anxious, I laid God's offers before him; he accepted them, and went away with a spirit at rest.'

'. . . A young man, a carrier, has come for some time to the chapel, and I have remarked that he always takes out his Bible and notes the text and any references I may make. I overtook him on Sunday morning going from chapel. He had a new pair of boots, of the fancy kind, so I remarked upon his boots, and asked if he had his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. He said no, in a serious tone. I begged him not to let the day close till he had closed with Christ, and sure enough I had to joy in his joy before we parted that night.'

Outcasts were not forgotten. Sarah W—— had fallen into shame. All her friends despised her. Having been once a Sunday scholar, Mr. Collins turned aside to Goudhurst workhouse to speak with her. He says: 'While I showed to her her sin, she wept. My very soul pitied her. Never, as then, had I seen the beauty of the love of Jesus to the lost. Oh, in face of that purity stooping so low, why are we, sinners, so swift to forsake? so merciless to condemn? Lord, replenish me with perfect love! Some Christian women, encouraged by my going

first, will now visit, and, I trust, rescue to ways of virtue this wanderer from the fold.'

Soon we find him again seeking a soul-jewel sunk down in mire still deeper—a poor waif of the street, rotting with disease. Seduced, cast off, degraded, she had run a fearful course, and run it fast. The poor wretch could scarcely speak through her gangrened throat. He says: 'I sat over her bed with a broken heart, preached to her, with tears, the mighty Saviour, and came away, not without hope that, at the last, this fallen one too should be found enfolded in the loving arms of Christ.'

'Between Darlington and Durham three handcuffed men, accompanied by a policeman, entered the compartment and sat by my side. I fell into conversation with the one nearest to me. He was going to Durham gaol for a week for trespassing. I suggested to him that when that week was over it would be well so to conduct himself that such attendants in livery as now accompanied him might never be needed more. He intimated that such was his intention. He came from Thornley colliery, and had been a Sunday scholar. I advised him upon his

return to seek counsel of a good leader there, whose address I gave him. He seemed affected by the verse upon the back of the tract I gave him :

> O Thou that wouldst not have
> One wretched sinner die ;
> Who diedst Thyself, my soul to save
> From endless misery ! '

Mr. Collins threw few chances of usefulness away ; thus, we note how two local preachers were guided into perfect love by a conversation carried on amid the busy hum of a bazaar. When was he without a word in season ? ' Sir,' said one he visited, ' I hope to be saved at last.' ' It would be better, friend,' was the reply, ' to be saved at first : so let us go down upon our knees and seek the blessing now.'

' What talents have I ? ' asked a desponding lady. ' Well, at all events, two : leisure and God's Word ; time and truth. Let them be well used, and your crown will be bright.'

Of a young local preacher he inquired, ' Have you family prayer at your lodgings ? ' The answer was, ' We are not to throw our

pearls before swine, so I have never proposed it.' His reply was, 'Be ashamed if *you have chosen* a hog-sty for your home, and more ashamed if you have vilified your home without reason. Evade duty no longer. Offer to do it this very night. If the offer be refused, find a better place. Never *willingly* pitch your tent where you may not build your altar.'

An invalid he found thankfully mindful of intervals of ease, but doubtful of God's mighty mercy in Jesus. 'Thomas,' said he, 'suppose I plunged into the Severn to save you from drowning; got you out, led you home; and at parting, on your doorstep, gave you a lozenge. What would rise to your mind ever after when you thought of me? The lozenge? the lozenge?' 'Oh no, sir! the rescue!' 'Well, let it be so concerning Jesus. You tell me of just one of His little gifts. Speak—as Paul did—of His dying love. Say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." Think of that, till it sets your soul on fire; think of that, till a passion for Him swells within you.'

This great evangelist exercised a powerful influence in *the families* that entertained

him. Records such as the following are in the Journal at once very sweet and very common: 'At Mrs. Smith's, of Brede, one of the servants was saved at family prayer.' 'At Peasmarsh, at tea, at Brother Filmer's, a youth was filled with joy unspeakable.' 'On Saturday evening, at Salehurst Abbey, the neighbours gathered in; I talked to them awhile; we then fell to prayer, and five of them were saved.' 'We had tea last evening at Miss Apps's. Two girls found peace. Miss Hilders, Mr. W. Apps, and Oliver, with several others, were there. Next Friday, in the same way, Miss Dawes will gather a few friends. Carefully managed, good will come of it.' Susannah Hodges writes: 'Mr. Collins met me at Mr. Francis's house. I had been a self-righteous Pharisee; but, in the morning service, the Spirit had opened the eyes of my soul, to see its own vileness. Mr. Collins asked, "Do you expect salvation to-night?" I replied, "Whatever good I may have, it is my resolve not to go away without it." He said, "I have pleaded with God this day for hours, in the wood, for souls: He will give them. I know His sign. I shall have souls to-night. Yours, I trust,

will be one." Well, night came, and with it such a power as I had never felt. Cries for mercy rang all over the chapel. Before the sermon was done, I, with many others, fell upon my knees to implore salvation. I found it; and to all eternity shall bless God for that Easter Monday.'

Another of his hosts says: 'We told him we wanted our three eldest children converted. "Three eldest?" said he; "why not all? My God says, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' I will not ask Him for less than all!" That large-hearted prayer was answered. All were given. One was saved in the chapel, and the other three at the family altar. Of those four, three already are landed in heaven.'

At Rickmansworth Mr. Collins stayed at the house of Mr. H. The son, Henry, was a backslider. He would not go to the meetings, and slipped off to bed to avoid family prayer. Mr. Collins called in at his room, knelt by his bedside, and prayed for him. Next morning, at half-past five, there he knelt again. This, each night and each morning, he continued until Friday, when the pent-up, long-resisted feeling could be

restrained no longer. The youth arose, went to the prayer-meeting, and, with tears, submitted his heart to Christ.

'*November* 17, 1846.

'I lodged on Monday night at Mr. Woods', a farmer, one and a half miles from the town. He proposed going to the six o'clock prayer-meeting in the chapel next morning. I proposed calling all his people together in the kitchen at that hour for prayer, for only he would have gone to Hempstead, and I, and they would not have had the opportunity. He assented, and the spirit of prayer was with us. His servant woman wept much in a place by herself, for no one spoke to her, and in the evening she attended the public service, and the prayer-meeting, and I have reason to believe she accepted Christ. There were a few more brought to Christ, and some notorious sinners attended the services, but one great hindrance is the want of a humble, working church. Our men are getting to set up their hats and place their heel down like gentlemen, and our women to put on head-dresses like people of style who know the world, and in the same degree as they do this, they are

strange in the work of God. I received intelligence yesterday from that very place that two Methodist families had fallen into some misunderstandings, and that my next business there will be to settle their differences. Last week I was principally at Redbourn. The forenoons I spent in my room, the afternoons in calling on my people, and the evenings in the chapel. The Lord was with us, though even there I did not see any converted to God, except perhaps two dear children. But last Lord's day, Mr. Purkiss from London took my place at Redbourn and great good was done. Several stubborn sinners were subdued, and the believers were abundantly comforted. I rejoice to have been the pioneer to a good, holy local preacher.'

We will give one more specimen of the blessed influence exercised by Mr. Collins in family life. 'Last Sunday a gentleman came with his gig to fetch me to Brierley Hill. As we went, I asked, "Are you happy in God?" "No." "Are you a Methodist?" "No." "How came you to fetch me?" "Oh," said he, "the Methodists often make use of me." I told him that I thanked him

for letting the Methodists have his gig; but for all that must claim from him that he let the Lord have his heart. At dinner, he besought me not to feel offended by his leaving at the end of the sermon; he was so nervous that, really, he could not bear the noise of the prayer-meeting. After preaching Mr. P. and this nervous man came in to tea. I asked P., "Are you happy?" "No." "Do you wish to be?" "Yes." "When? now, or seven years to come?" "Indeed, I hope it will not be seven years first." "Well, then, let us seek it of God now." At the word we fell to prayer. The men wrestled; the servant wept; and the daughters, two sweet young maidens, sobbed as they knelt at the sofa. It was a boisterous time; but in less than half an hour P., the nervous man, and the girls were all rejoicing together. The presence of the Lord went with us to chapel: several were saved there. Then mercy visited the house again. An unsaved son, affected by the happy witness of those blessed in the afternoon, began to weep. Seeing that, we deferred supper for prayer; he and Phœbe, the servant, were both made glad in God. I retired, had a

gracious night's rest, and awoke with the sweetness of God upon my spirit.'

The true evangelist has perhaps his greatest opportunities for good in *personal dealing with young people.* Mr. Collins had right ideas as to the relation in which the children of godly parents stand to Christ and His Church. He held as firmly as his father did that the children of Christian parents are born within a covenant, but he held just as tenaciously that no child is born a Christian. They may have prevenient grace, they may have fine spiritual instincts, godly example and the family altar may have brought them very near to the kingdom, but the stepping into the kingdom must be their own definite act. There must come *a supreme moment* when such children will with true naturalness and simplicity yield their lives to Jesus Christ. That is the moment of conversion, very different in its method and manifestation from the conversion of a hardened sinner, but none the less conversion.

On all occasions, in chapels, homes, and quiet waysides, Thomas Collins endeavoured to lead children and young people to definite decision and to a personal confession of

Jesus. Writing to one of his brethren he said, 'One great error is made by Wesleyans: they neglect the first manifestations of grace which the Holy Ghost plants in their children. Bring your children up for the Lord from the cradle; mind, from the cradle.' Then he gave them definite opportunities of declaring themselves on the Lord's side. For this purpose he generally established what came to be called 'catechumen classes' for children. In these classes he instructed them in their privileges, and led many to bear their first witness for the Saviour. It was a beautiful sight to see this shepherd every Saturday afternoon in the midst of his lambs, and many hundreds of those lambs he led into the fold of Christ, thus doing what proved to be the most beautiful, fruitful, and permanent work of his life.

It is our deep conviction that one of our greatest needs in the life and organization of the Free Churches to-day is a type of evangelist who can lead the young people of Christian families to the acceptance and avowal of Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

The Anglican Church, by laying emphasis

on the value of the baptismal rite, by careful preparation in Confirmation classes, and then by the public solemn service of Confirmation, secures a strong and permanent hold upon the young life of that great communion. It is easy to deny the presence of spiritual efficacy in the priestly act of Baptism and Confirmation, but the young people who enter intelligently and earnestly into these Confirmation services may, and many of them do, as a result of their own self-surrender and public avowal, experience that great spiritual change we call conversion. We utterly deny the priestly assumptions and the claims to spiritual prerogatives generally associated with this service in the Anglican Church, and yet we are convinced that the Nonconformist Churches need some substitute for that service.

The pastor of every church should so watch over and train his young people that it will be easy and natural for them—at the right moment—to declare themselves on the Lord's side. But it needs a special form of evangelism in many cases to bring to fruition all the parental prayers, all the

early and silent vows, and all the pastoral training.

Our Sunday schools do not fully supply this need, though we gladly testify to the deep and sacred influence which certain teachers exercise upon their young people. We also greatly rejoice in the efficacy of what is called in our churches 'Young People's Sunday.' This special Sunday is a very sacred day in the early history of thousands of our most exemplary Christians. On that day they 'stepped over the line,' and became pledged in heart and life to the Saviour.

We desire that the occasions for these definite public decisions on the part of our young people should be more frequent, and that they should be prepared for by the whole Church in a more earnest manner. A child is worth more to the kingdom of Christ than a man. The life has not been wasted, the motives and affections have not become mixed, the conscience is neither distorted nor blunted, and the faculties have not been prostituted to evil. All the possibilities of life—long service and ever-increasing influence—are in the boy or girl,

and the Church has never yet prayed or planned for the conversion of the young as it ought to have done.

In Methodism the circuit minister who is pastor and evangelist is the best man to deal with the young people to whom we refer. He understands them better than a stranger can do. They need to be understood in this matter. The influence of education and the growing reticence there is in religious life has made a great difference with certain of our young people. They need to be brought to the supreme moment of personal decision and of public testimony, but they must be brought to it in the right way. They cannot be saved as a mob, and their salvation will probably not be accompanied by noise and demonstration. The Philippian jailer may be the type of conversion that takes place among hardened notorious sinners, and a glorious type of conversion it is. But Lydia, 'whose heart the Lord opened,' is more likely to be the type of our young people. These two conversions, so widely different and yet so blessedly alike in all that is essential, took place in the same city, on the same visit by Paul, and are

recorded in the same chapter (Acts xvi.) in order to show us that, while 'there is one Spirit,' there is also a great diversity of operation and manifestation. The flower, opening under the kiss of heaven's sunshine, is the type for many of our sensitive and refined youths, and the pastor who knows them, their history and their surroundings, should be the evangelist who has the joy of leading them to the all-important step of decision for Christ. He is the best man for this work because he can train them beforehand, so that their personal avowal will be an intelligent, whole-souled act of devotion to the personal Christ. Further, he is the best man because, after this step has been taken, he can introduce them to Christian service and thus secure to the kingdom of Christ their precious gifts and powers. The Free Churches of this land would do well to unite in asking the Ascended Lord to give a host of pastor-evangelists who will be mighty through God in dealing with the vast numbers of young people who are to be found in our families, sanctuaries, and schools.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EVANGELIST AND PRAYER

WE have endeavoured to make it clear that the evangelist's true power is the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit is the gift of our ascended Lord, richly bestowed on all who trust and honour Him. That Divine Spirit is 'the other Comforter,' 'the other Helper,' always with us, always *in* us, taking the place of the living, human Jesus. The means by which this power is obtained is *prayer*.

The unhindered, all-controlling presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart is the joyful experience of men who pray. Thomas Collins was a man mighty in prayer. He had power with God in the secret place, and this power, pervading and strengthening his own personality, made him in public irresistible with men. It gave him that mysterious power we call *unction*, when we wish to

distinguish it from other kinds of power—'An anointing of the Holy One.'

His experience gave him an unwavering confidence in the prevailing power of prayer. In his mind there was no nice balancing as to whether prayer was subjective or objective—he knew and felt it was both.

Soon after his conversion he arranged a concert of prayer with a band of young men. Twelve of them entered into a covenant that they would rise at five in the morning, and each in their closets plead with God for the salvation of their townsmen. This vow was faithfully kept until he left his native town, and this formed in him the habit of solitary communing with God, and of earnest wrestling for the salvation of others.

At the first District Synod he attended he came into contact with Hodgson Casson. Having sat through the business of the Synod all the day, they did not hasten away to socialities in the evening, but we read that 'Casson, Mortimer, and Collins went and visited various Christian families and had several rounds of prayer.'

His love of prayer was such that no inconveniences could lead him to break off the

habit. One of his ministerial friends gives us a beautiful glimpse of his prayer-methods in Orkney, illustrating that the man who is often alone with God is mighty in dealing with men.

'As his lodgings furnished no convenience for vocal freedom, he was accustomed to retire to a sheltered cave in the cliff. Though he knew it not, loving people observed his frequent resort thither, and wonderingly found that their pastor often spent successive hours communing with God in that cold closet on the shore. Sometimes a whole day passed in fasting, intercession, and meditation. After one such season, returning home, he met an unconverted hearer. Conscious that a well of power had gushed up in his own soul, he longed that it should flow out upon others. "Donald," says he, "I wish to pray with you." Though quite unconcerned, the man respected his minister too much to refuse, and, therefore, led the way to his humble cot. Mighty influence came upon him; and as his pastor urged the reiterated prayer, "Lord, break Donald's heart! Lord, break Donald's heart!" the great rough fisherman sobbed for mercy, nor

did he get up from that floor until he arose in the conscious joy of a new creature.'

In order to fix his mind and be definite in his prayers, we find that he arranged a scheme of prayer, which was carefully observed throughout his life. One hour every noonday was set apart for intercessory prayer, and the following was the plan :

'*Monday*.—For my family and kindred. These, as is right, come first. What affection suggests, Providence endorses, by putting them nearer to me, and laying them more upon me, than others.

'*Tuesday*.—My throne of grace list : enemies, if I have any ; friends, specially beloved, specially tried, or who have specially claimed an interest in my prayers.

'*Wednesday*.—My own Connexion in general, and my own circuit in particular.

'*Thursday*.—The universal Church of God, with careful remembrance of its decayed branches, and consideration of its current wants, perils, or progresses.

'*Friday*.—The unsaved world. Jews, Turks, infidels, heretics, and all such as are out of the way. For this litany prepare by study of the missionary map, and diligent

perusal of all accessible reports of evangelistic effort.

'*Saturday.*—Implore heavenly blessing on the labours of the coming day.'

He gave much time and thought to his preparation for the work of the Sabbath, but it must be observed that his preparation was not only intellectual but spiritual. He prepared himself as well as his sermon. One whole day in every week—generally Friday—was spent in secret fasting, meditation, and prayer for help on the Lord's day.

This whole day spent in audience with the King had a powerful influence on the work of the Sabbath. Again and again, as he records these precious days in his Journal, we read that his desires grew intense, and prayer became a bold and mighty wrestling, as he cried out, 'A hundred souls! Lord, give me and my brethren next week in this circuit a hundred souls! It is little for Thee. O Thou who didst in one day at Pentecost save three thousand, give us next week a hundred souls.' We do not wonder that the closet told upon the pulpit and the pew. Next Lord's-day morning he appeared before his people like a man full charged with power.

This power moved the whole congregation. Strong men bowed and sobbed, and at the morning service it was no unusual thing for numbers to be saved.

He not only prepared himself, but he also prepared his people. In every circuit in which he travelled he arranged early Sunday morning gatherings for intercession. He often walked miles in the early hours to these prayer-meetings, even though he had to preach three times during the day. In those days the Methodist evangelists knew little of organization as we employ it to-day, but they were men mighty in prayer. The result was that sinners were subdued and brought to God at every public service, and at class-meetings, prayer-meetings, and sacramental services as well. Every meeting was a revival meeting in which people found salvation.

The two things that made this man's life one continual ministry of salvation were: *first*, his faithful proclamation of great saving truths; and, *second*, his all-prevailing prayer.

There were some characteristics or elements in his praying that all evangelists—

—and, indeed, all Christians—would do well to note.

There was *personal communion with God.* His inmost soul was in habitual fellowship with the unseen. He never broke off his connexion with God, the source of unchanging power. He walked in the Spirit—i.e. the Holy Spirit was always in control. He enjoyed God, loved God, leaned upon God, talked to God without words. This inward communion becomes the habit, the natural attitude, of the soul. I like the man who once said in an experience meeting, 'I used to pray three times a day; now I only pray once a day, and that is *all day.*' That was the inner life of Thomas Collins, a life never out of touch with God.

In addition to this there was *mighty wrestling and intercession.* Communion goes downward into the inmost recesses of the soul, and replenishes the deepest springs of the man's own nature. Intercession goes *downward, upward,* and *outward.* It is the man's inmost soul wrestling with God for others. This mighty intercession with God is always unselfish prayer. Its thoughts are not fixed on self; it does not nurse its

own happy frames and feelings, but desires above everything else to serve others. James says (iv. 3), 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it upon your pleasures.' Their prayers were faulty because they simply desired their own safety and enjoyment. Men like Thomas Collins forget themselves in their pleading for others. They may pray for personal blessings so long as the motive that prompts is that they may use these things for others.

Thomas Collins '*lifted up holy hands*,' and he could not tolerate the slightest iniquity in his heart. Here we have another element in all successful prayer. Sin in the heart and life hinders prayer. Has not God said, 'I will shut My eyes; when you make many prayers I will shut My ears' (Isa. i. 15)? Why, and under what circumstances, does God turn away from His children? When they come into His presence with fingers, lips, and hands that are unholy. Thomas Collins lived a victorious, sin-conquering life, and therefore he had power with God. Worldliness might sometimes affect certain members of his Church, but it never crept

into his soul. The love of God left no place for the love of the world.

He prayed for great things. How often he rebuked the smallness and narrowness of his people by crying out in his prayer-meetings, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it'! He remembered that prayer not only places all the forces of Heaven at our disposal, but, as some one has well said, 'It opens the whole planet to man's activities. It makes man a universal power, for he can touch hearts in far-off lands through prayer. The activities of prayer are not limited to the place where the body is. Prayer knows no limitations. The man of prayer goes into a switch-room, touches a handle, and sets in motion a power that moves the world.' It was thus with Thomas Collins. He gloried in the fact that 'whosoever' was the word for sinners, and 'whatsoever' was the word for believers.

'Showers of blessing,' floods upon the dry ground, were what he longed for. The dew of heaven may keep vegetation alive, but it will not cleanse the drains and replenish the springs. For this we need the early and the latter rain.

Another essential in mighty prayer is *persistence*. The persistence that never gives up, that never loses heart, but goes again and again and again *seven times*. This great evangelist never tired of praying. When he put the names of persons, families, or congregations on his prayer-list, he never took them off until the blessing came. There might be difficulty and delay before the answer came, but his prayers removed the hindrances and ended in victory.

Then his prayer was the kind of prayer that *works*. If he prayed for individuals or families, as he often did, he took care to throw around them a network of holy influences, and he very legitimately helped God to answer his prayers. It was the same when he prayed for worldly, dying churches. He would give them unusual pastoral care, would warn some and encourage others, until the hindrances were removed and the revival came.

This is pre-eminently an age of great opportunity. True, there is materialism in the air, but it is not difficult to discern that there is also a revolt among the best men of science against materialism. In

public life the spirit of altruism, or a desire to serve others, has taken hold of the hearts of men. Among the critics of Christianity there is a change of attitude. Men are asking for a Christianity that is practical, they are demanding a gospel that touches every part of human life ; and the Churches need not shrink from that test. Among the Churches themselves there is an intense longing for a time of great visitation. The Christian Churches are highly organized, they are generous, they are active, and they are philanthropic. We wish that they would unite in unselfish, large-visioned, wrestling, agonizing prayer. If all the organizations and activities of the combined Churches were fully charged with power from on high, their buildings would be crowded, their services would be full of salvation, and the strongholds of sin would be shaken to their fall.

The ministers of the Churches must first be baptized with the power that comes through prayer. In this matter the pew will never permanently rise above the level of the pulpit. In every age the secret of mighty evangelism has been power from

on high ; and in every age when the ministers of the Churches have sought this power, the people have sought it also.

Let the Churches pray for *great* things, expect *great* things, and *dare* great things. Great things are being accomplished in the realm of natural science. Great things may also be done in the spiritual kingdom. This may be the age of miracles. Christian people, at any rate, must not hesitate to proclaim their faith in the supernatural. In every spiritual movement it is 'the hand of God' that works. When that 'hand' works, it works miracles of grace and power, for He is able to do far more exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

In the Methodist churches this may well be called the golden age. The great city missions have reached and saved those outside the Church in a way that has surpassed the most sanguine expectations. The growth of men's brotherhoods is perhaps the most significant development in our times. They have attracted and influenced the industrial manhood of England in a way that has almost staggered our most enthu-

siastic workers. Our greatest need at the present moment is that all the circuits of Methodism should come into line. There need be no slavish imitation of the methods of central missions. We have plenty of scope for the exercise of freedom and for the power of adaptation. What is wanted in every sanctuary—large and small—is just the determination to save the great outside world of men and women. Then we shall turn to the true source of power, and every Methodist church will be a mission church.

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